

Testimony Supporting HB 5299: An Act Increasing the Age of Eligibility for the Postsecondary Education Funding Program Offered by the Department of Children and Families.

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

March 8, 2022

Dear Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, Senator Witkos, Representative Haines, and esteemed members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Caron Quantick, and I am a resident of Cheshire, CT. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 5299: An Act Increasing the Age of Eligibility for the Postsecondary Education Funding Program Offered by the Department of Children and Families.

This bill proposes extending higher education and vocational program funding to young people who grew up in foster care up to the age of 30. It would help cover their tuition costs, fees and supplies, and basic needs while they are enrolled in a program. I think this is a good idea because I know it personally took me 5 years to complete my degree. I had to work while attending school and fund my own education. The average time it takes to complete a degree is increasing and it is important we are changing our available resources with changes to society. We need to have a better understanding of the needs of our foster and adopted youth.

I care about providing opportunities to young people who grew up in foster care because I adopted my son from DCF care and I am currently fostering 2 children. And I think foster youth need support beyond the age of 21 because children who have grown up with trauma often take a good amount of time to access education. When their basic needs are not being met, they are unable to make strides academically. When our son came into our home at 5 years old, he had only been talking for a year. He had to repeat kindergarten as he was only able to make strides forward when he had stability in our home. He continues to struggle with behavioral needs that impact his learning. These factors early on in life will have an impact on his ability to access higher education in a timely manner. Many foster youth will need to work full time while in school. This will further the need to extend the time funding is available to them. If this funding is truly put into place to break the cycle and create a better future for foster youth, we must make it accessible to them. We must be sure we are offering the incentives in a way in which they will actually be able to benefit, thrive and be successful.

Connecticut is the legal guardian of these young people, and the State should do right by them and try to help them as a parent would want to. The Connecticut General Assembly should provide DCF the

resources to extend higher education support up to age 30. I urge you to favorably pass this bill out of committee.

Thank you for considering my testimony,

Caron Quantick

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